

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION,
AT
NORTHFIELD FARM,
THE FORMER JAGUAR PLANT,
BROWNS LANE, COVENTRY

Jonathan Webster

With contributions by Dennis Williams

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 3461
Report 1749
BRL 10

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Archaeological Evaluation at Northfield Farm, the Former Jaguar Plant, Browns Lane, Coventry

Jonathan Webster

With contributions by Dennis Williams

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Northfield Farm, on the former Jaguar Plant, Browns Lane Coventry (NGR SP 43010 28140). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd for their clients, Goodman Limited, who intends to construct a combination of commercial and domestic properties for which a planning application has been granted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological remains predating that of the former 19th century farmhouse were present and if so to indicate what their location, date and nature were.

The investigation demonstrated that demolition in 2008 of the 19th century farm, while thorough, did not completely remove all traces of the farm complex. The southern foundation of the farmhouse survived partially and a stone culvert running across the former courtyard area remained intact. No evidence was revealed of earlier occupation on the site with any possible evidence being removed by later intrusive works, including landscaping related to the construction of 19th century farm buildings themselves.

No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or horizons were observed, nor artefacts recovered.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Northfield Farm, at the former Jaguar Plant, Browns Lane, Coventry (Fig 1; NGR SP 43010 28140), on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd for their clients, Goodman Limited. Goodman Limited intends to construct a combination of commercial and domestic properties and has recently been granted a conditional planning agreement by Coventry City Council (reference 55011).

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist of Coventry City Council (Coventry City Council 2010) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (CgMs Consulting Ltd 2010).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation. The purpose of this was to establish their significance, since this would make it possible to recommend an appropriate treatment which may then be integrated with the proposed development programme.

- Recover evidence for any activity pre-dating the establishment of Northfield Farm
- Establish a date for the construction of Northfield Farm and contribute to understanding the development of the landscape around Allesley.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of Coventry Historic Environment Record. In addition the following cartographic sources were also consulted:

- 1809, Allesley Sketch maps
- 1841, Allesley Tithe Survey
- 1863, Map of Estates belonging to trustees of General Charities, Coventry, 24
- 1888, 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, scale 1":1 mile

2.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

Fieldwork was undertaken between 8 and 11 February 2010. The site reference number and site code is BRL 10.

Four trenches, amounting to just over 180m² in area, were excavated over the site area of approximately 3,000m², representing a sample of 6%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. All trenches were placed to investigate elements of the former farm complex and any earlier phases of occupation on the site.

Trench 1 was located at the west end of the site on an area of grass that was hoped to be unaffected by the development of Northfield Farm. Trench 2 investigated former outbuildings within the farm complex in an attempt to reveal any earlier foundations. Trench 3 targeted the central courtyard of the farm, whilst Trench 4 investigated the 19th century farmhouse itself and related gardens to the immediate north of the building.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

2.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 **Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams**

2.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 2).

2.3.2 **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved finds were examined, and a primary record made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. The finds were identified, quantified and dated to period, and a terminus post quem date produced for each stratified context. These dates were used as a means of determining the broad chronology of the site.

The pottery and ceramic building materials were examined under ×20 magnification and recorded by fabric type according to the Warwickshire medieval and post-medieval pottery type series (Soden and Ratkai 1998).

2.4 **The methods in retrospect**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The site is located at approximately 115m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) with the ground dropping to the south and southwest along a ridge above the River Sherbourne, close to the village of Allesley. The geology comprises Allesley Member Sandstone dating to the Upper Carboniferous period (CgMs Consulting Ltd 2010).

The origin of Northfield Farm appears to have been in the later half of the 17th century when the enclosure act of 1654 created several new farms in the area. The farms owned by Thomas Crow, of which this was one, were left to trustees in 1809 after his will created the Crows Charity on his death. Thomas Crow left property (including Northfield Farm) in Allesley, Berkswell, Coventry and Meriden, in trust that from the rents, £1 should be spent yearly at his trustees' discretion. 16s. were to be spent weekly on the maintenance of eight poor, aged, or infirm widows or spinsters in the city of Coventry, who were to be placed, in Ford's Hospital. The testator's residuary estate, which he left to be charitably disposed of by his executors, was applied by them to the apprenticing of two to four boys yearly under the administration of the trustees of the Cow Lane charity school (VCH VIII).

By 1909 the scheme had grown and paid for sixteen pensions, this increase in charitable outgoings necessitating the need for further income. This was achieved by the sale of Northfield Farm in 1940, and the charity's other properties in Coventry in 1954 and 1957, and by 1961 the charity was benefiting about 30 pensioners (VCH VIII).

The earliest cartographic evidence known of the farm is the 1809 Allesley sketch map drawn for the Trustees of Crows Charity immediately after the death of Thomas Crow. This plan shows the farm house along with a small outbuilding to its immediate north. This sketch was resurveyed during the 1841 Allesley Tithe Survey, and again in 1863 for the map of Estates belonging to trustees of general Charities, Coventry. This latter map shows the construction of stables to the west of the farm house. The farm buildings appeared to have changed little, although additional outbuildings were added along the northern edge of the land creating a courtyard area. These buildings were locally listed, however due to fire damage they were subsequently demolished in 2008 (CgMs Consulting Ltd 2010).

4. **Results**

4.1 **Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2 to 5 and Plates 1 to 4. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

The natural substrate was revealed at 112.30m AOD rising to the east and northeast to a maximum height of 113.98m AOD and sealed by between 0.34m and 0.71m of made ground. This made ground became thicker towards both the west and east ends of the site, creating a level surface with a raised platform along the west and northwest corners of the site. This in turn was overlain by a mixed topsoil, up to 0.35m in thickness.

In Trench 3 structure 3006 truncated the underlying natural substrate and was constructed using naturally fractured fragments of local sourced sandstone. The structure had no base and was built with blocks lain on end against each other to create a channel that averaged 0.23m in width. This was then covered by slabs placed over the void creating a culvert. No mortar or bonding agent was used in the construction of this structure. The fill of culvert 3006 was a silt rich clay 3007. It was sterile, with no mixing present, suggestive of deposition by a constant low energy fluvial action (Fig 5, Plate 2).

Remnants of the former Northfield Farm were revealed in the southwest end of Trench 4 at an average height of 113.50m AOD, sealed by topsoil 4001. Wall foundation 4004 truncated the

underlying natural substrate and was constructed using large blocks of locally derived sandstone, bonded together using a firm yellow grey mortar with frequent charcoal flecks. No facing or coursing was noted and all evidence suggested that the structure had been constructed in a single event (Fig 5, Plate 1).

Whilst no evidence remained from any of the other buildings within the farm complex the junction between Trenches 1 and 2 revealed a modern intrusion 1008 roughly rectangular in shape and 4m by at least 3m in plan. 1008 truncated the underlying natural substrate before being sealed by 0.71m of overburden, This in turn was covered by a thin spread of topsoil. To the immediate southwest a small gully, 1004, 0.36m in width and a maximum depth of 0.14m, was filled by a single silty sand fill 1005. Gully 1004 was truncated by a pit, 1006 that was 0.50m by 0.70m in size and 0.08m in depth and filled with a single silt rich deposit 1007, before being covered by 0.27m of overburden (Fig 4, Plate 3).

4.2 Artefact analysis, by Dennis Williams

4.2.1 The artefact assemblage

This site produced a very small assemblage, comprising ceramic, glass and metal finds, all of which were late post-medieval or modern in date (Table 1). The state of preservation of the ceramic and glass finds was generally good, but the metal finds were all ferrous and very corroded.

Period	Material class	Count	Weight(g)
Post-medieval/modern	Ceramic	5	172
Post-medieval/modern	Glass	13	967
Post-medieval/modern	Metal	4	38
Totals:		22	1177

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage.

4.2.2 Pottery

Pottery finds were confined to four sherds of stoneware (fabric STE), recovered from pit fill 1007 (Table 2). Two vessels appeared to be represented in this group. Rim and base sherds, from a straight-sided, grey-glazed jar, constituted a common form that was undiagnostic in terms of a precise date range, but likely to have been produced during the 19th or early 20th centuries. Similarly, the remaining two sherds, glazed grey internally and brown externally, were probably from a single vessel (in this case of unidentifiable form), and dating from the 19th or early 20th centuries.

Period	Fabric code	Fabric common name	Count	Weight (g)
Post-medieval/modern	STE	English stoneware	4	149

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by period and fabric-type.

4.2.3 Other artefacts

Ceramic building material

A single, fragmentary sample, which could have been either brick or tile, was recovered from stone culvert 3006; this had a hard fabric with a streaked appearance, owing to poor mixing of its clay, and could have dated from any time within a broad post-medieval or modern date range.

Glass

The most substantial glass find was from overburden 1002, and consisted of an almost-complete soft drink bottle. This bottle was two-piece moulded in clear glass, and decorated with a raised, hexagonal lattice pattern, which incorporated the tradename 'TIZER'. This style of bottle probably dates from the few years following the introduction of Tizer in 1924 (A G Barr 2010).

A small, but complete, glass jar was recovered from pit fill 1007. This bore the moulded inscription 'CHESEBROUGH, MANFAC. CO. CD., NEW YORK', and had an external thread for a screw top. This jar would have contained petroleum jelly, which was produced by Robert A. Chesebrough, using the tradename 'Vaseline' from 1870 onward (Unilever United States 2010).

Other glass fragments included base and beaded rim sherds from a preserves jar, found in gully fill 1005. A similar jar rim was recovered from pit fill 1007, along with the base of a fluted vase.

Metal

A few iron objects recovered from gully fill 1005 were small and heavily rusted, making recognition difficult. However, some appeared to be the remains of coil springs, possibly from a bed.

4.2.4 Overview of artefactual evidence

The artefacts recovered from this site were typical of those expected for domestic occupation and use during the late post-medieval and early modern periods. The *terminus post quem* dates determined for the contexts are shown in Table 3.

Due to their modern nature and low significance, the artefacts will be discarded.

Context	Material class	Object specific type	Fabric code	Count	Weight(g)	Start date	End date	<i>tpq</i> range
1002	glass	vessel	-	1	691	1924	c 1940	1924-c 1930
1005	glass	vessel	-	5	26	1850	1950	1850-1950
	metal	unident	-	4	38	1850	1950	
1007	glass	vessel	-	1	124	1870	1930	1870-1950
	glass	vessel	-	5	96	1850	1950	
	glass	vessel	-	1	30	1850	1950	
	ceramic	pot	STE	2	159	1800	1950	
3006	ceramic	brick/tile	-	1	23	1700	1900	1700-1950

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

5. **Synthesis**

Despite modern truncation caused by the demolition of the 19th century farm complex in 2008, fragmentary remains of the former foundations and a stone culvert did survive intact (Fig 3). Unfortunately no evidence was revealed of occupation on the site pre-dating that of the known 19th century buildings. The grassed area at the west of the site was revealed to have been landscaped with a large modern intrusion truncating the underlying natural substrate. The farm complex itself was built on a platform cut partially into the hillside to remove the natural gradient, and it is possible that during those intrusive works earlier evidence of activity may have been removed. The farmhouse appeared to have been constructed in a single event and made use of the local sandstone for the foundations. This same sandstone was also used in the construction of a culvert that ran through the central courtyard area.

5.1 **Research frameworks**

It was anticipated that this archaeological investigation would help provide further data for identified research areas such as early post-medieval Coventry (CgMs Consulting Ltd 2010, 6). However due to the absence of significant archaeological remains and deposits, no additional information was gained in this instance.

6. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client has agreed that the content of this section is acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd at Northfield Farm, the former Jaguar Plant, Browns Lane, Coventry (NGR SP 43010 28140). The investigation demonstrated that demolition in 2008 of the 19th century farm, while thorough, did not completely remove all traces of the farm complex. The southern foundation of the farmhouse survived partially and a stone culvert running across the former courtyard area remained intact. No evidence was revealed of earlier occupation on the site with any possible evidence being removed by later intrusive works including landscaping related to the construction of the latest phase of farm buildings themselves.

7. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, James Gidman (CgMs Consulting Ltd) and Chris Patrick (Planning Archaeologist, Coventry City Council).

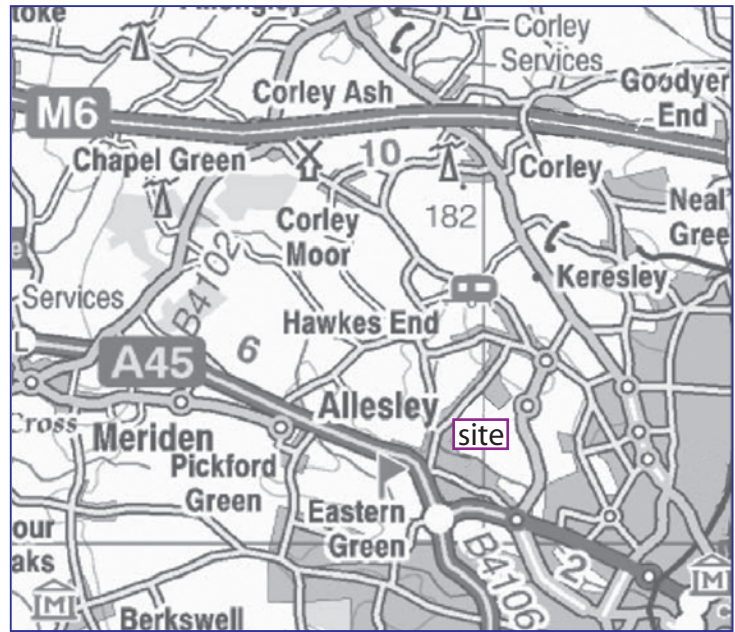
8. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Jonathan Webster. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Webster assisted by Richard Bradley and Mike Nicholson, finds analysis by Dennis Williams, and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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Figures



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Location of the site

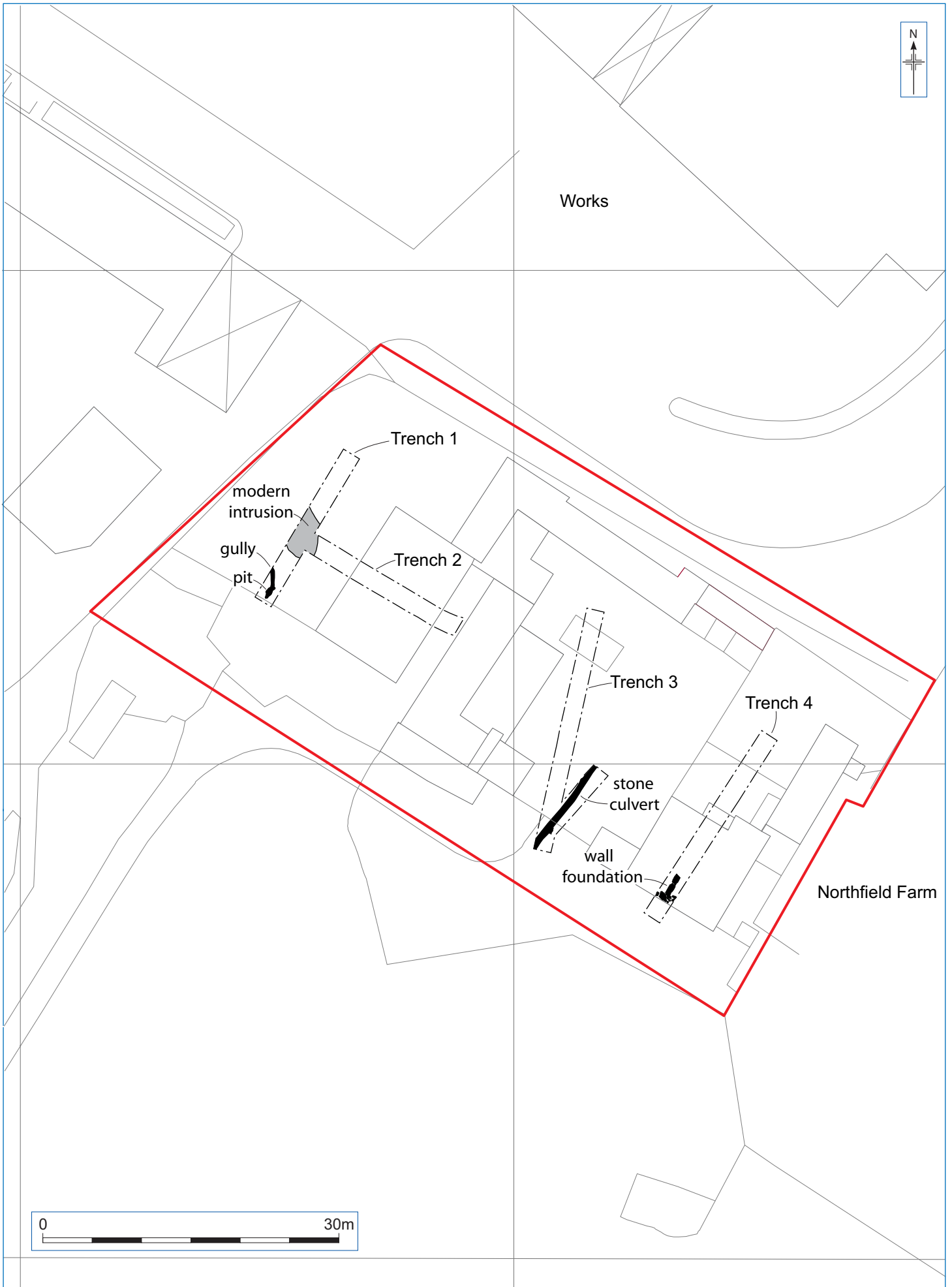
Figure 1



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Trench location plan (based upon CgMs Consulting Ltd 2010: Fig 2)

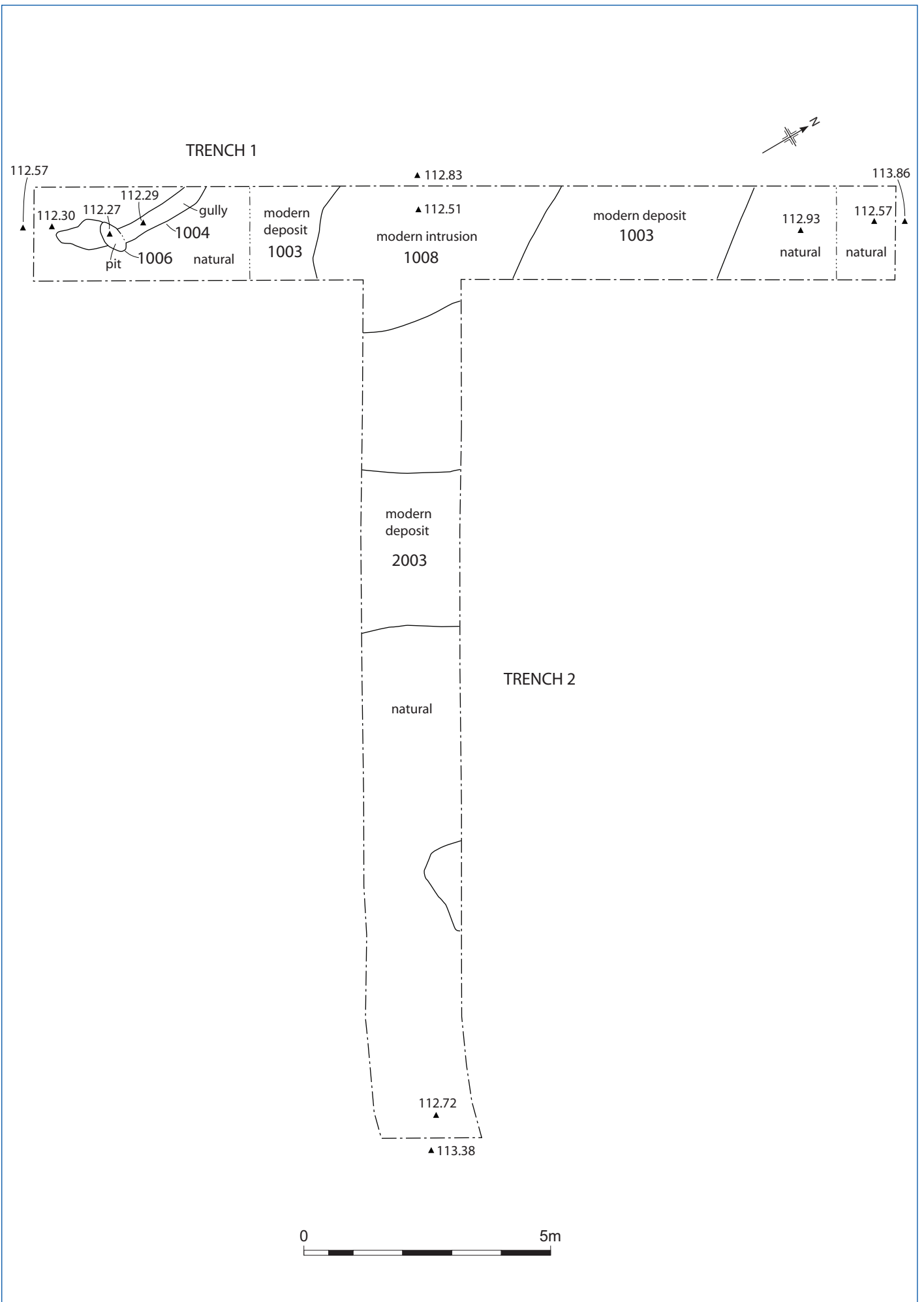
Figure 2



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Location of archaeological features (based upon CgMs Consulting Ltd 2010: Fig 2)

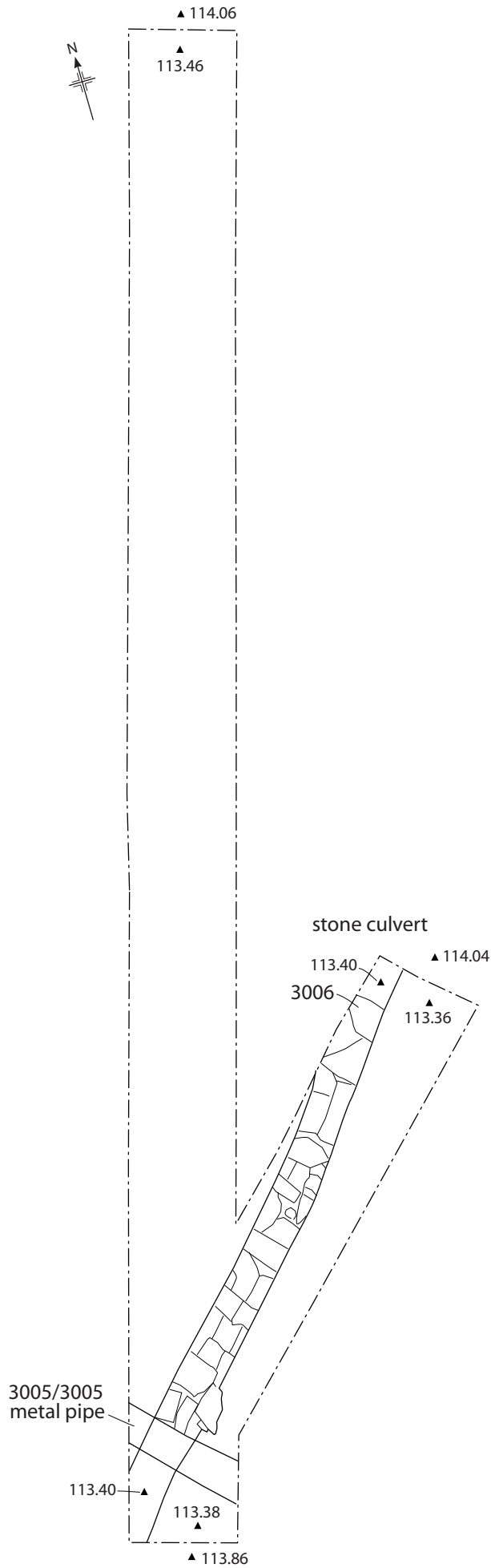
Figure 3



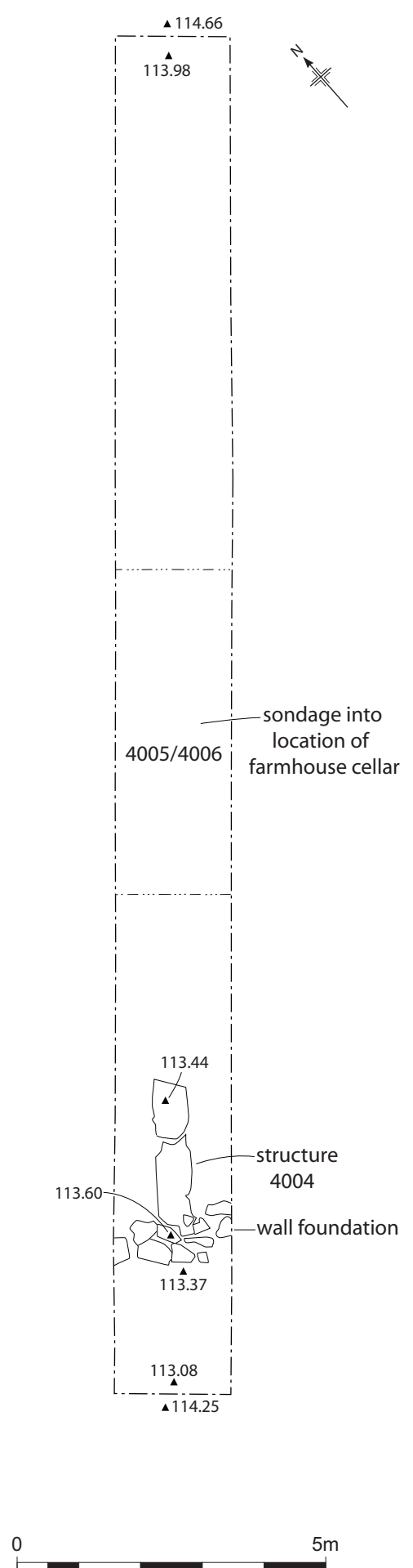
Trenches 1 and 2: plans

Figure 4

TRENCH 3: PLAN



TRENCH 4: PLAN



Trenches 3 and 4: plans

Figure 5

Plates



Plate 1, Wall foundations 4004 of former farmhouse; looking southeast; scale 1m



Plate 2, Sandstone culvert 3006 truncated in foreground by modern service 3005; looking northeast; scale 2m



Plate 3, General shot of Trench 2 showing natural substrate 2004; looking west; scales 1m



Plate 4, General shot of Trench 3 showing natural substrate 3003; looking southeast; scales 1m

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 20m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.27-1.44m

Orientation: southwest-northeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1001	Topsoil	Medium grey brown humeric rich silty loam heavily disturbed by rooting and mixed with frequent charcoal, CBM and stone inclusions	0.00-0.35m
1002	Made ground	Medium pinkish brown sandy silt. Moderately compact with frequent inclusions of darker humeric topsoil sods mixed throughout. Also present is frequent CBM, charcoal and stone inclusions.	0.36-0.71m
1003	Made ground	Light pinkish brown silty sand. Moderately compact with frequent charcoal and stone inclusions throughout.	0.72-0.88m
[1004]	Cut of Linear	North/South orientated linear 0.36m in width and at least 2.30m in length. The linear was U shaped with moderate sides and concaved base to a maximum depth of 0.14m.	N/A
1005	Fill of [1004]	Mixed medium greyish brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks throughout. 0.14m thick.	0.28m
[1006]	Cut of pit	Sub-oval pit 0.50m by 0.70m in size and 0.08m in depth.	N/A
1007	Fill of [1006]	Dark blue grey silty sand with frequent charcoal flecks throughout. 0.08m in depth.	0.30m
1008	Modern Intrusion	Sub rounded feature 4m by at least 3m in size and filled with angular hardcore.	0.61m
1009	Deposit	Dark brown sandy silt including small angular stones and flecks of charcoal.	0.93m
1010	Natural Substrate	Light reddish grey sand rich silts and degraded sandstone with occasional bands of light orange gray clays.	0.28m+ at southwest end. 1.29m+at northeast end.

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.85m

Orientation: northwest-southeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
2001	Topsoil	Medium grey brown humeric rich silty loam heavily disturbed by rooting and mixed with frequent charcoal, CBM and stone inclusions	0.00-0.30m
2002	Made ground	Medium pinkish brown sandy silt. Moderately compact with frequent inclusions of darker humeric topsoil sods mixed throughout. Also present is frequent CBM, charcoal and stone inclusions.	0.31-0.85m
2003	Made ground	Dark brown sandy silt including small angular stones and flecks of charcoal.	0.86-0.87m
2004	Natural Substrate	Light reddish grey sand rich silts and degraded sandstone with occasional bands of light orange gray clays.	0.31m+ at east end 0.88m+ at west end

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.50m

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
3001	Topsoil	Medium grey brown humeric rich silty loam heavily disturbed by rooting and mixed with frequent charcoal, CBM and stone inclusions	0.00-0.12m
3002	Made ground	Light greyish orange silt rich sand. Occasional CBM and charcoal flecks throughout. Along with occasional patches of clinker and ash.	0.13-0.45m
3003	Natural Substrate	Light reddish grey sand rich silts and degraded sandstone with occasional bands of light orange gray clays.	0.46m+
3004	Fill of [3005]	Metal pipe for modern service.	0.38m
[3005]	Cut for service	Linear service orientated East/West at least 1.80m in length and 0.70m in width	0.38m
3006	Stone Culvert	Linear orientated Northeast/Southwest 10.60m+ in length and 0.80m in width, 0.72m in depth. Constructed using naturally fragmented sandstone averaging 0.14m thick.	0.47m
3007	Fill of 3006	Silt rich clay sterile in nature with no mixing present, suggestive of deposition by a constant low energy fluvial action.	0.52m+

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.80m Depth: 0.68-1.20m

Orientation: southwest-northeast

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
4001	Topsoil	Medium grey brown humeric rich silty loam heavily disturbed by rooting and mixed with frequent charcoal, CBM and stone inclusions	0.00-0.25m
4002	Made ground	Medium pinkish brown sandy silt. Moderately compact with frequent inclusions of darker humeric topsoil sods mixed throughout. Also present is frequent CBM, charcoal and stone inclusions.	0.26-0.55m
4003	Natural Substrate	Light reddish grey sand rich silts and degraded sandstone with occasional bands of light orange gray clays.	0.56m+
4004	Stone Foundations	Structural sandstone foundation constructed using angular blocks of varying size with no coursing noted. Bonded by a firm yellow grey mortar with frequent charcoal flecks.	0.65m
4005	Backfill of [4006]	Very loose red brick sand with frequent pieces of brick, CBM and sandstone. At least 2m in thickness.	0.26m+
4006	Cut of former cellar	Demolition cut that removed cellar of former Farm building 5.2m in length and at least 1.8m in width. Cut had vertical sides and was at least 2m in depth, the base of the cut was not revealed.	0.26m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

4	Context records AS1
4	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
42	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
1	Context number catalogues AS5
1	Levels record sheets AS19
4	Trench record sheets AS41
7	Scale drawings

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum,
Jordan Well,
Coventry.
CV1 5QP
